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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [PHUM](#) [PINR](#) [MO](#)
SUBJECT: AMAZIGH (BERBER) CONFERENCE DEMANDS

REF: A. RABAT 00321

[1](#)B. RABAT 00676

[1](#)1. This cable is sensitive but unclassified. Please treat accordingly.

[1](#)2. (U) Le Reporter (April 20), a weekly French-language magazine format journal, reported the results of the April 7 and 8 Amazigh (Berber) conference held in Meknes. (Note: Meknes is located east of Rabat in the Meknes-Tafilalt region, and, it is a traditional Amazigh and Jewish city, as well as a former imperial city, reftel A). Seventy associations met to discuss the position of the Amazigh in modern Morocco. Le Reporter discussed the history of various Amazigh associations, including the Royal Institute for Amazigh Culture (RIAC), and the development of Amazigh political parties (reftel B).

[1](#)3. (U) Conference participants produced eleven demands for the GOM. These demands are:

--The abrogation of the constitutional article that identifies Islam as the state religion. The article supports exclusion. Moreover, on the one hand, not everyone is looking for a protector of their faith and on the other hand not everyone is necessarily Muslim.

--The Amazigh language and the principle of secularism in the constitution must be made official so that the state is open to the outside world and reconciled with its history.

--Amending the decree relating to the generalization, unification and "arabization." (Note: "Decree" refers to a royal edict. End Note.) It is a coercive decree that penalizes Moroccans who are educated and taught in another language. (Comment: This statement means that Amazigh are at a disadvantage because they are educated in Arabic. End Comment.)

--The Amazigh language must be an official language in order to ensure its continuance. Making Amazigh official allows its native speakers to benefit from material and symbolic advantages.

--The (official) language status forces the state to do its best to develop, promote and spread Amazigh language and culture. The Amazigh activists have the right to struggle to force the state to work to that end, resorting to the courts if necessary.

--The teaching of the Amazigh language must be proposed to all Moroccans and must benefit from any right granted to the Arab language. Any other status for the Amazigh language is demeaning.

--Public institutions and institutes, administratively and financially autonomous and mandated to manage public affairs in the Amazigh areas must be created. There must be a standard Amazigh language.

--The associations movement must be fostered. (Note: "Associations" are nongovernmental organizations, reftel B) They form an ideal "breeding ground" for the emergence of a nation's elite. The development of a nation is measured through the importance of its associations.

--The development of audiovisual media for each geographical area (radio, TV, newspapers) must be promoted. These are effective instruments and mechanisms for socialization and expanding the country's languages and cultures.

--Rethink the educational system. The Moroccan educational system has been led astray from its formative mission, serving an ideology. Only a surgical procedure can alleviate the prejudices caused by a more than poor educational system. A simple reform cannot be the appropriate answer, thus the Amazigh movement recommends a complete rethinking of the education system with the perspective of modernizing it and adapting it to the employment market.

--The teaching of foreign languages. The current mono-lingualism is synonymous with illiteracy in a changing and diversifying world. Multi-lingualism must be, of course, mandatory, if we want to take part in globalization. To that end, the teaching of foreign languages must be offered to all citizens.

14. (SBU) Comment: Central to the eleven demands is the establishment and recognition of the Amazigh language. Language appears to be the essential identity marker for the associations represented at the conference. The elimination of Islam as the state religion and demanding the cessation of the "arabization" of the Amazigh population are forthright political changes, which require constitutional changes, as does the demand for autonomous regions. The fact that seventy associations agreed on these focused demands demonstrates that there is a "grassroots" effort by at least part of the Moroccan population to steer the country's reform efforts. It remains to be seen, however, whether or not the demands will lead to constitutional change (reftel B). End Comment.

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